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Canadian Says Barbie Boasted of Visiting the U.S.

By RALPH BLUMENTHAL

Klaus Barbie, the former Nazi Gestapo chief accused of having committed war crimes in France, has boasted of having visited several American cities, according to a former Canadian convict who says he became a confidant and biographer of Mr. Barbie in Bolivia.

Mr. Barbie, who was extradited to France on Feb. 6 to face trial on charges of having committed wartime atrocities in Lyons, is said to have told the Canadian of trips to New Orleans, San Francisco, Houston and Galveston, Tex., as well as to France and West Germany. The trips purportedly took place in the 1960's or early 1970's in connection with Mr. Barbie's partnership in a Bolivian shipping concern, now bankrupt.

The Canadian who made the statement is Robert G. Wilson, 50 years old, a self-described former jewel thief and safecracker from Vancouver, British Columbia. By his own account, Mr. Wilson went to Bolivia to steal gems in 1971 and ended up an intimate of Bolivian Government ministers and of Mr. Barbie.

Says He Was Granted a Pardon

Mr. Wilson said he was granted a Canadian Government pardon last March for crimes committed from 1951 to 1975. He said he had not been involved in Government intelligence work. Since 1975, Mr. Wilson says he has been writing a book based on his purported link to Mr. Barbie.

In a report first broadcast on ABC News on Feb. 11, Mr. Wilson said that Mr. Barbie had told of breaking the French Resistance in Lyons by turning a captured partisan, René Hardy, into a traitor and that he had told of having made trips to the United States. Mr. Hardy has denied collaboration.

In subsequent interviews last week in Vancouver, Mr. Wilson played a tape recording made, he said, with Mr. Barbie in Bolivia in 1975. In addition to tape recordings, the Canadian supports his account with photographs and other materials.

A spokesman for the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, Verne Jervis, said that a quick search of the agency's records had turned up no trace of Mr. Barbie under his main pseudonym, Klaus Altmann, and that he could not confirm or deny that Mr. Barbie had made trips to the United States. The search was based on a survey of central immigration records that contain information on all entry points in the United States, in-

cluding those cited by Mr. Wilson. Mr. Jervis added, however, that immigration records, particularly those going back to the 1960's, were incomplete and unreliable.

U.S. Inquiry Said to Have Begun

Mr. Wilson's statement has prompted Attorney General William French Smith to ask the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations to study whether Mr. Barbie may have been let into the country improperly, and if so, under what circumstances, according to a Justice Department official familiar with the inquiry.

Other Government investigations are also under way into statements by a former United States Army counterintelligence agent, Erhard Dabringhaus, who has said that under orders in 1948 in West Germany he protected Mr. Barbie and paid him \$1,700 a month for intelligence information.

On one of the tape recordings Mr. Wilson played in Vancouver last week, a voice can be heard saying in halting, German-accented English: "I know Colombia, I know Panama. I have been in the United States, I have been in Germany, I have been in France and I have made four, three, four, five, six years many business routes, fly."

At another point in the tape, Mr. Wilson can be heard asking the man he identifies as Mr. Barbie whether the shipping company he controlled with the Bolivian Government, Transmaritima Boliviana, was seeking access to the ocean. The German-accented voice responds: "Access to the ocean, yes. But we have no port. But we have shipping to Hamburg and United States, the Gulf, the Mexican Gulf, Houston. I have visit all these port."

'Didn't Ask for Any Receipts'

According to Mr. Wilson's account in interviews and in his unfinished book manuscript, he went to Bolivia in 1971 with a partner to deal, as he put it, "in objects of undetermined ownership — I didn't ask for any receipts."

Arriving in La Paz amid the unrest after the takeover by Col. Hugo Banzer Suárez, the two visitors were seized and jailed at the Interior Ministry and were held for three days, Mr. Wilson said.

He said he made the acquaintance in jail of a young army major whose father was in the Bolivian Cabinet. Mr. Wilson declined to identify either man for publication on the ground, he said, that they would be jeopardized by their connection to Mr. Barbie. Mr. Wilson

said the major later came to visit him in Vancouver and that he went back to Bolivia as the guest of the major's father.

On June 22, 1972, Mr. Wilson said, he was dining in a La Paz hotel with the minister when the official was called home, explaining to his guest that an important visitor had arrived. Mr. Wilson said he accompanied the minister home and found the house surrounded with troops protecting the visitor, who he said was Klaus Barbie, officially known as Mr. Altmann. Mr. Barbie is believed to have entered Bolivia in 1951 from Genoa, Italy. He lived in La Paz, Bolivia's capital, and reportedly made trips to neighboring countries.

Mr. Wilson said that he was introduced to Mr. Barbie and that they soon became friendly. He said he persuaded Mr. Barbie to tell his story and that with the help of an American writer, Tom Ardies, he raised \$20,000 from a backer to pay Mr. Barbie for his cooperation. He displayed a contract of March 1974 that carried the signature of Klaus Altmann.

Mr. Ardies, now an advertising man in Palm Springs, Calif., confirmed the account in a telephone interview. He said that he participated in the last tape-recorded interview with Mr. Barbie in 1975 but that he later dropped out of the project.

Barbie's Account

Mr. Wilson said that as part of the book contract, Mr. Barbie provided his own memoir of about 130 pages to be included in the book.

Mr. Wilson displayed a photocopy of a

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